The Lemon Grove REVIEW

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IN THIS ISSUE

- WEATHER & LOGS
- LETTERS
- PUBLIC NOTICES
- ENTERTAINMENT
- CLASSIFIEDS

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Chinese New Year

'Congratulations, you did not die'

by Daphne Galang

Around 30 members of the Forum Club — readers and writers of the six Forum Publications newspapers — bring in the New Year Chinese style. *Photo by Ninette Sosa*

The virtual season of Chinese New Year began Sunday with New Year's Eve and will continue for 15 days until the Festival of the Lanterns.

It is a traditional family celebration for Chinese Americans, but it is also an opportunity for the entire community to learn about Chinese culture.

This year, Monday marked the beginning of the Year of the Rat.

Chinese New Year is not a fixed day on the Western calendar because it follows a calendar based on the cycles of the moon. The new year begins on the second new moon following the shortest day in the year, the Winter Solstice (Dec. 21).

Each year is represented by one of 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac. This year is ruled by the rat, the first animal in the cycle. The cycle continues with the ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.

Traditionally, Chinese believe that people born under a particular sign exhibit traits of that animal. Some Chinese record the year, hour, day and month of babies in order to predict its future. Those born in the Year of the Rat are characterized as ambitious, charming, imaginative, and generous.

On the eve of Chinese New Year, families reunite for a large dinner. Many foods served have symbolic significance. For example, it is common to eat noodles for long life, and fish (yu) because it sounds like the Chinese word for abundance.

In another tradition, the young children bow and pay respect to their elders, then they receive red envelopes with lucky money from their older married relatives. The red color symbolizes happiness.

To set a good precedent for the year, people avoid arguing and cursing on New Year's day, and they visit relatives and friends.

Ancient legend has it that a beast called "Nian" (also the word for "year") would roam about looking for Chinese to swallow on New Year's Eve. People would lock their doors and hide inside.

An old man came up with a scheme to subdue the beast. He challenged Nian, saying he attacked humans only because he feared other beasts of prey. Nian took the challenge and went around swallowing other animals.

Therefore, it is customary to greet people on the New Year with "Congratulations, you did not die."

A group of Forum Publications' writers and readers received a full explanation of these and other customs at a Chinese New Year feast held Saturday the the Royal Szechuan Restaurant in Santee.

The Chang family, owners and operators of the restaurant, came from Taiwan nearly 20 years ago. Family members demonstrated the use of chopsticks, taught the group some Chinese phrases and served up a mixture of Mandarin and Szechuan dishes.

Chinese have played a part of East County's history for more than a century.

Before the turn of the century, Chinese laborers worked on various construction projects in the area, said Jim Van Meter, curator of the Spring Valley Historical Society's Bancroft Ranch House Museum.

The book, *Our Hills and Valleys: A History of the Helix-Spring Valley Region* by Thomas Joseph Adema, includes a diary entry by National City Founder Frank Kimball, noting that Chinese laborers were hired in 1887 to work on the Sweetwater Dam. A second entry tells of an anti-Chinese riot that destroyed a Chinese camp during the dam's construction.

Around 1891, Chinese were also involved in building a three-mile-long irrigation system that provided water to the Prentice Ranch in the Casa de Oro area.

Calculating the Chinese presence in East County is difficult. School-based data lumps most Asians in one ethnic group, giving specific statistics for only "Filipinos" and "Pacific Islanders." United Way statistics indicated Chinese make up nearly 10 percent of the county population.

Unlike San Francisco and Los Angeles, there is no real Chinatown in the San Diego area. There is a small concentration of Chinese businesses on Convoy Street in San Diego, but the residences of Chinese families are spread around the county.

Helix district says sparse rainfall not a danger

by Norrie West

The storms of 1995 did not make a return visit this year, leaving San Diego County well below normal rainfall so far this year.

Since July 1 of last year, East County has had less than three inches, compared with a normal of 6.15 inches.

But not to worry. The Helix Water District, which serves La Mesa, Lemon Grove and parts of El Cajon and Spring Valley, has enough water in storage in three lakes — Cuyamaca, Jennings and El Capitan — to supply its customers with water until mid-July if they never get another drop of rain or are cut off from Colorado River and Northern California water supplies.

That assurance comes from Robert D. Friedgen who has been general manager of Helix Water District since 1980, with 41 years of service.

"There isn't the slightest doubt that if we had the very worst-case scenario — no rain and no imported water — we could supply every one of our 232,000 users with water for more than five months," Friedgen said.

"That doesn't mean we don't want or like rain. Do you realize that one day of rain will save us 15 million gallons that would normally be used in watering lawns and gardens?" he added.

It is interesting and hopeful, he said, to note that water usage in our area has gone down in the last 10 years, from 178 gallons per person per day to 132.

That's a big drop, 26 percent. Especially when you consider there are 232,000 users in the 50-square-mile area that comprises the Helix district.

"That reduction in usage has been due primarily to conservation measures that customers began during the 1987-93 drought," Friedgen said. "And it helps materially, because 85 percent of our water comes to us from the Colorado River and the state water system."

There are five pipelines connecting San Diego County to the Metropolitan Water District's Colorado River aqueduct, built from Lake Havasu to Lake Matthews in Riverside County in 1930. It has a yearly capacity of 1.3 million acre feet.

History speaks clearly — San Diego's semi-arid, Mediterranean climate has always had droughts and always will.

"This may be just a dry year, not the start of a drought," Friedgen said. "But we could still have a good year for runoff into our reservoirs if we get good February-March rains, especially in the mountains."

What Helix and other water agencies want to achieve is a "drought-proof" water supply. The conventional wisdom is to increase Colorado River water sources.

That's why Helix and other agencies comprising the County Water Authority are talking with the Imperial Irrigation District about the possibility of buying water and bringing it from the desert and through the mountains to our coastal plain.

"That is a long-time off, maybe 15 years, but it could be a great thing for us who live here in this semi-arid region," Friedgen said. "Should anything happen to the water we get from Metropolitan, another source of Colorado River water would be absolutely vital to our survival.

To build across the desert and over the mountains could run to $2 or $3 billion, a cost that would be shared by all water customers in the county.

Before any deal could be finalized, there are six California agencies that have priorities for Colorado River water whose approval must be secured. This is part of the negotiations currently being conducted.

The water secured from this new source must be affordable and of acceptable quality.

"We are most fortunate that San Diego began thinking about Colorado River water more than 70 years ago and signed an agreement that gave us an entitlement from that river back in 1933 when we weren't in need," Friedgen said.

He said the Imperial Valley water would double the yearly supply of water to about 800,000 acre feet by the year 2020.

The Helix Water District, with headquarters in La Mesa, began business in 1913 as the La Mesa, Lemon Grove and Spring Valley Irrigation District. Thirteen years later it purchased the Cuyamaca Water Co., which owned the flume and Cuyamaca Lake.

The company changed to its present name in 1973, on its 60th birthday, because agricultural production was replaced by a booming residential growth following World War II.

Today, Helix owns a water system worth $81 million, employs 140 local residents, and delivers water to its 232,000 customers via four million feet of pipe.

Vintage train trip to Tecate scheduled

The San Diego Railroad Museum is offering an all-day train trip to Tecate, Mexico this Saturday.

The vintage train will leave at 9 a.m. from the San Diego & Imperial Valley station in San Ysidro, traveling along the old San Diego & Arizona and Tijuana & Tecate railways.

Travelers will be able to enjoy the scenery and international tunnel along the route. The trains return to the U.S. at 4:45 p.m.

Once in Tecate, visitors have three hours to stroll into town, tour the Tecate Brewery, enjoy free entertainment, shopping and sample local Tecate beer.

Participants are invited either to bring a picnic or dine in one of Tecate's many restaurants.

Round-trip tickets are $60 for adults and $30 for children requiring a seat. Group rates for 15 or more are available.

Seating is limited and reservations are required. For further information, call the San Diego Railroad Museum at 595-3030.

PG Perspectives

Thoughts on thought

by Phillip Giannangeli

The other day, I was sitting around thinking. Nothing special, just thoughts randomly bouncing off each other. After a while, though, it dawned on me: I was thinking about thinking. That made me try to focus on what it was I was actually thinking about thinking, and that made me tired. Can't think too much or too hard without getting bushed, I've discovered. So I did the logical thing. I started daydreaming.

Some may contend that there's not much difference between thinking and daydreaming, but they aren't true practitioners of either of these inner cranial ballets. Thinking is the run-across-the-stage-throw-your-partner-in-the-air tour de force while daydreaming is a swirling-pirouetting-graceful, chiffon-covered opus. And for me to cogitate too much about thinking versus daydreaming is always very debilitating. When that happens, I just call up a friend and chat.

Talking, I've found, is a great way to avoiding thinking. I've been able to babble on for hours without a single thought traversing the horizon of my brain. And I know plenty of people who are just like me. Talking and thinking aren't necessarily exclusive, but that doesn't stop many of us from practicing the former while completely ignoring the latter. But what the heck. Who's listening anyway?

Another sure way to avoid thinking is to attend meetings. I read somewhere that most of the basic laws of nature are violated when one tries to think at a meeting. That pretty much applies to any kind of meeting. A huge vacuum of thought develops at meetings and trying to fill that emptiness with thinking of any kind can cause injury to the thinker.

That droning you hear at most meetings is a thought-suppressing technique imposed by the devil. Yes, old Beelzebub himself. The people who call meetings are in league with Satan and they have a kind of quid pro quo agreement that bars thinking of any sort in exchange for the torture of mandatory attendance.

Daydreaming may sometimes try to sneak in to fill the void, but even daydreaming often succumbs to that numbing demonic drone.

The only sure-fire thing that will stop thinking (on a less than permanent basis, that is) is sleeping. Nobody I know of can think and sleep at the same time. Well, maybe Martha Stewart can, but then is there anything she can't do? But since I'm exhausted, and the daydream I've been having is a little too explicit for this forum, I'll just have to take a short snooze. No more thinking. Just a short little ...

zzzzzzzzzzz

WEATHER

The following information was provided by the Lemon Grove Fire Department.

		High	Low
February	9	65	53
February	10	64	55
February	11	-	-
February	12	67	53
February	13	72	56
February	14	69	50
February	15	70	51

Lemon Grove Almanac

1994 Population: 25,100
Incorporated: 1977
Area: 3.75 sq. mi.
Median income: $34,399
Mayor: Bob Burns
Council: Thomas Clabby
Craig Lake
Dwight Shelley
Mary Teresa Sessom
City Manager: Doug Yount
Planning Director: Jim Butler
Public Works Director: vacant
Attorney: Gloria McLean
City Clerk: Christine Taub
Sheriff's Capt.: Yolanda Collins
Fire Chief: William Wright
Congressional district:
52nd - Duncan Hunter
State Senate district:
40th - Steve Peace
State Assembly district:
77th - Steve Baldwin
Supervisorial district:
2nd - Dianne Jacob
1993 taxable sales: $1.47 million

Libraries:	1
Post offices:	1
Parks	4
Recreation centers	1

Letter to the Editor

Just asking

I wish to thank both of you gentlemen, Mr. Saint and Mr. T.L. Ryder (professional journalists) for your comments to my question, "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as Your Personal Lord and Savior" [Letters to the Editor, Jan. 11 & Jan. 25].

Mr. Saint asked the question, "As Jesus might have said, for which of my do you condemn me?" For your words of omission Mr. Saint. Omitting words from your article, "The Two Jesus Christs," left your readers confused, not informed.

To T.L. Ryder, ["Jews for Journalism"]. According to a professional journalist, journalists and historians have to suppress their own biases. From your response to the question, "Have You Accepted Jesus Christ as Your Personal Lord and Savior," tells us you have laid your 25 years of journalistic skills to rest.

Nowhere did the question relate to employment.

Nowhere did the question relate to right wing extremists.

Nowhere did the question relate to hating fellow Americans.

It was just a question.

JAMES F. VinCUREK
El Cajon

Commentary

Washington and the cherry tree

by Paul Treske

Passing through the office of one of our local elementary schools last week, I noticed that the bulletin board was brightly decorated with cut-out profiles of George Washington's head and colored paper collages representing that undying myth of American lore, the cherry tree.

Here, arguably, is the greatest figure in all of American history and he is taught to our youthful school children as the boy who chopped down the cherry tree and then "couldn't tell a lie."

George Washington was a fortunate miracle whose presence before and at the birth of the United States enabled us to become the great constitutional nation we are today. His list of accomplishments is so long and wondrous, given the times during which he lived, that he stands far above any American since. And yet, none of these feats seem to be stressed with our youngsters as much as that damn myth about the cherry tree.

I suppose that those who teach the cherry tree in connection with old GW make the argument that his real achievements are beyond the comprehension of children in kindergarten and first grade. After all, he lead ragged colonial troops through a terrible war of attrition to eventual triumph, he chaired the Constitutional Congress which established the basis for our governmental structure today and, after serving two terms as president, wisely refused a third term, thus setting a standard for all successful modern-day democracies.

But apparently, feeling this is too complex for youngsters, we have instead fallen back on the wretched cherry tree story. Unfortunately, there are all too many adults today whose education was so lacking that all they really know about Washington is the vague notion of his being "the Father of His Country" AND that he couldn't tell a lie.

History remains a seriously weak point in American education and I believe it starts by us falling back on simple myths instead of more complicated reality. Ask Americans about the Civil War and most of them will tell you it was fought to free the slaves, while in reality the Emancipation Proclamation was made over a year after southern secession actually started the war.

We know that James Monroe developed a doctrine, but don't know what it's about. We know that Andrew Jackson helped win the Battle of New Orleans, but don't know why that battle was fought. And we know that Teddy Roosevelt lead a charge up San Juan Hill, but don't know why. In short, our grasp of history is all too often composed of non-associated bits and pieces, and downright fanciful myths.

So, as we lay this year's celebration of Washington's birthday to rest, let's do the same to that old cherry tree into the Rappahannock River, along with the silver dollar he's supposed to have thrown, and learn some real facts about what a great man he was. We owe him much more than just a belief in his woodsmanship and honesty.

College Notes

Connie A. Friedman-May of Lemon Grove was among 2,385 graduate and undergraduate students candidates for degrees from **Southern Illinois University** at Carbondale in December. Friedman-May will receive her master of arts degree in May during spring commencement exercises on campus.

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$35

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Box 127, Lemon Grove, CA 91946

(Don't pay the Daily Californian $42)

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE T.S. No. A207101 Unit Code A Loan No. 180738/Reh APN 479-410-38-00 T.D. Service Company, as duly appointed Trustee under the following described deed of trust WILL SELL AT PUBLIC AUCTION TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER FOR CASH (in the forms which are lawful tender in the United States) and/or the cashier's, certified or other checks specified in Civil Code Section 2924h (payable in full at the time of sale to T.D. Service Company) all right, title and interest conveyed to and now held by it under said Deed of Trust in the property hereinafter described: TRUSTOR: Norbert O. Reh, Kathryn J. Reh BENEFICIARY: Western Federal Savings and Loan Association Recorded August 1, 1991 as Instr. No. 1991-0381210 In Book page of Official records in the office of the Recorder of San Diego County, said deed of trust describes the following property: That portion of Lot 45 of Subdivision no. 3 of Lot 12 of Rancho Mission of San Diego, in the county of San Diego, State of California, according to Licensed Surveyor Map no. 5, filed in the Office of the County Recorder, March 23, 1892, described as follows: Beginning at a point on the South line of said Lot 45, distant thereon 229.50 feet easterly from the southwest corner of said Lot. Said point being the southwest corner of Parcel 2 of the land described in deed to George J. Peters, et ux, recorded April 5, 1947 in book 2380, page 59 of Official Records, thence easterly along said south line 70 feet, thence northerly parallel with the west line of said Lot, 160 feet, thence westerly parallel with the south line of said Lot 70 feet to the west line of said Peter's land, thence southerly along said west line 160 feet to the point of beginning. YOU ARE IN DEFAULT UNDER A DEED OF TRUST DATED 7/22/91. UNLESS YOU TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY, IT MAY BE SOLD AT A PUBLIC SALE. IF YOU NEED AN EXPLANATION OF THE NATURE OF THE PROCEEDING AGAINST YOU, YOU SHOULD CONTACT A LAWYER. 6938-40 Mount Vernon Street, Lemon Grove, CA 91945 "(If a street address or common designation of property is shown above, no warranty is given as to its completeness or correctness)." The beneficiary under said Deed of Trust, by reason of a breach or default in the obligations secured thereby, heretofore executed and delivered to the undersigned a written Declaration of Default and Demand for Sale, and written notice of default and of election to cause the undersigned to sell said property to satisfy said obligations, and thereafter the undersigned caused said notice of default and of election to be Recorded June 29, 1994 as Instr. No. 94 0412137 In Book Page of Official Records in the office of the recorder of San Diego County. Said sale of property will be made in "as is" condition without covenant or warranty, express or implied, regarding title possession, or encumbrances, to pay the remaining principal sum of the note(s) secured by said deed of Trust, with interest as in said note provided, advances, if any, under the terms of said Deed of Trust, fees, charges and expenses of the Trustee and of the trusts created by said Deed of Trust. Said sale will be held on: February 27, 1996, At 10:30 a.m. At the entrance to the City of Oceanside, Nevada St. Annex located at 321 Nevada St., NV at Fourth) Oceanside, CA At the time of the initial publication of this notice, the total amount of the unpaid balance of the obligation secured by the above described deed of trust and estimated costs, expenses, and advances is $163,762.62. It is possible that at the time of sale the opening bid may be less than the total indebtedness due. Date: 1/31/96 T.D. Service Company as said Trustee, By Frances DePalma, Assistant Secretary 1750 E. Fourth St., Ste 700 Santa Ana, Ca 92705 (714) 543-8372 We are assisting the Beneficiary to collect a debt and any information we obtain will be used for that purpose whether received orally or in writing. If available, the expected opening bid may be obtained by calling the following telephone numbers on the day before the sale: (714) 480-5690 TAC 423665c PUB: 2-6, 2-13, 2-20

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE TS No.: 95-0586-0108 Loan No. 1324602 YOU ARE IN DEFAULT UNDER A DEED OF TRUST DATED 8/2/93. UNLESS YOU TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY, IT MAY BE SOLD AT A PUBLIC SALE. IF YOU NEED AN EXPLANATION OF THE NATURE OF THE PROCEEDING AGAINST YOU, YOU SHOULD CONTACT A LAWYER. On 3/12/96 at 10:00 AM, **Lonestar Mortgagee Assistant Corp.**, as duly appointed Trustee under and pursuant to Deed of Trust recorded 8/10/93, as instrument No. 1993-0516609, in book –, page –, of Official Records in the office of the County Recorder of San Diego County, State of California, Executed by Thomas C. Mendiola and Melba C. Mendiola, husband and wife as Joint Tenants will sell at public auction to highest bidder for cash (payable at time of sale in lawful money of the United States) At the South entrance to the County Courthouse, 220 West Broadway, San Diego, California, (Note: Cashier's check(s) must be made payable to Lonestar Mortgagee Assistance Corp. all right, title and interest conveyed to and now held by it under said Deed of Trust in the property situated in said County and State described as: As more fully described in the above mentioned Deed of Trust. APN # 577-120-13 The street address and other common designation, if any, of the real property described above is purported to be: 1890 Skyline Drive Lemon Grove, California 91945 The undersigned Trustee disclaims any liability for any incorrectness of the street address and other common designation, if any, shown herein. Said sale will be made, but without covenant or warranty, expressed or implied, regarding title, possession, or encumbrances, to pay the remaining principal sum of the note(s) secured by said Deed of Trust, with interest thereon, as provided in said note(s), advances, if any, under the terms of said Deed of Trust, fees, charges and expenses of the Trustee and of the trusts created by said Deed of Trust. The total amount of the unpaid balance of the obligation secured by the property to be sold and reasonable estimated costs, expenses and advances at the time of the initial publication of the Notice of Sale is $136,271.80. The beneficiary under said Deed of Trust heretofore executed and delivered to the undersigned a written Declaration of Default and Demand for Sale, and a written Notice of Default and Election to Sell. The undersigned caused said Notice of Default and Election to Sell to be recorded in the county where the real property is located. Date: February 05, 1996 Lonestar Mortgagee Assistant Corp., as Trustee, Sanara A. Branam, Authorized Signature. Address: P.O. Box 515388, Dallas, Texas 75251-5388. For Trustee's Sale information please call (916) 387-7728. LONESTAR MORTGAGEE SERVICES, L.L.C. IS A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ASAP193943 2/20, 2/27, 3/5

Travolta's 'Broken Arrow' fiend hits mark

by Betty Jo Tucker

In "Welcome Back, Kotter," he amused television audiences as Barbarino, the hunky Sweathog. In "Saturday Night Fever," he mesmerized with electrifying dance routines.

In "Get Shorty," he graced the screen with a laid-back charm as a loan shark trying to break into the movie business. In "White Man's Burden," "Pulp Fiction," "Grease," "Look Who's Talking," his performances hinted at greater things to come from this versatile actor.

Now, in 20th Century Fox's new action thriller, "Broken Arrow," John Travolta achieves full stature as an accomplished actor. All great actors must be able to play convincing villains as well as believable heroes.

In "Broken Arrow," Travolta's chilling portrayal of a cold-hearted, manipulative Stealth bomber pilot (who masterminds a nuclear weapon extortion plot) proves his ability to give any type of role a unique flair that makes the character more interesting and watchable.

John Travolta is no Vinnie Barbarino in "Broken Arrow."

In spite of repetitive explosion scenes and sometimes overpowering background music, "Broken Arrow," maintains a high level of excitement from beginning to end. Another appealing actor, Christian Slater ("Bed of Roses," "Interview with a Vampire"), co-stars as a Stealth bomber co-pilot who tries to foil the extortion plot. He and Travolta share a few "buddy bashing" scenes reminiscent of the classic Spencer Tracy-Clark Gable banter in films like "Boom Town" and "San Francisco." Perky Samantha Mathis ("Pump Up the Volume") holds her own as a wonder woman park ranger who risks her life to help Slater.

Intriguing special affects and great stunts provide this movie's major thrills, but it is John Travolta's impressive turn as a villain that makes "Broken Arrow" a must-see.

East County Theater Guide

Lamplighters Community Theater
8053 University Avenue, La Mesa (464-4598)
"Quilters" by Molly Newman & Barbara Damashek
Friday and Saturday, 8 p.m.
Sunday, 2 p.m.
Tickets: $10 - $12

Grossmont College Theatre Arts
Stagehouse Theatre, Grossmont College
8800 Grossmont College Dr., El Cajon (465-1700, ext. 234)
"Getting Out" by Marsha Norman
Wednesday through March 2, 8 p.m.
March 3, 2 p.m.
Tickets: $7 - 10

San Diego State University Drama Dept.
Experimental Theatre, SDSU
Campanile Drive, San Diego (594-6902)
"Memories of Chester & Billy" a musical based on Theodore Dreiser's "An American Tragedy"
Friday & Saturday, 7:30 p.m.
Tickets: $8 - $12

The surfing cat — or one of her nine lives

by Susanne Riddle-Haslinger

It is said that cats have nine lives and it may be a legend derived from humans seeing them survive high falls. Theory says this is due to a parachute effect which at a certain point of a fall, the cat's body will "soar," causing the cat to slow down and land safely.

Being the cat lover that I am, I can attest to the many lives that my own cats seemed to have plenty of, particularly one feline named Sam.

Of all the cats I have had, Sam (short for Samantha) has proven to be the most curious, most adventurous and, no doubt, smartest of them all. She knows no obstacles when snooping for goodies or a warm place to curl up and snooze.

Unlike the others, who sit and stare at her with awe, Sam can stand on her two hind legs and open cabinet doors with her front paws and crawl into the towel closet for her nap. Sam will not drink water from any container when people are around and has her humans trained to turn on a faucet to a low trickle to quench her thirst.

Visitors, upon seeing this trick respond by asking if they can turn on the water for Sam, allowing her to add another sucker to her list. Woe to the poor overnight guest not forewarned about Sam and her love of the shower.

Like most cats, Sam would not care to dive into a pool of water but she loves to sneak into the bathroom and just as one has a fully lathered head, jumps up onto the shower doors causing a great racket.

The first time this happens, the unsuspecting victim has visions of Norman Bates and emits screams resembling the soundtrack from "Psycho."

How many of the legendary nine lives Sam has used up in her own nine years is uncertain but there have been a few.

There was the time I was checking to see if the towels were dry in the dryer and the phone rang. Leaving the dryer door open, I answered the phone and upon hanging up, returned to the dryer.

Deciding the towels could use a few more turns, I closed the door and started to walk away when I heard a strange sound, thump, thump, thump.

Puzzled, I wondered if I had included tennis shoes in the load of towels and knew that I had not. I returned to the dryer and opened the door and was horrified when Sam spilled out onto the floor.

Fortunately, Sam could walk a straight line again within minutes, her eyes were no longer crossed and her tongue was back in her mouth. I have never since failed to check for a cat before turning on the dryer.

The most scary time of all was when Sam became a surfer. Not a water surfer but rather, a surfer on top of the mini-van. On one of her escapes, she chose the top of the van to take a cat-nap.

The van had a luggage rack and Sam was well-hidden as I hopped in and drove off into the Texas sunset. Backing out of the drive-way, I tuned into the oldies but goodies and vigorously sang along with Sonny and Cher to, "I Got You Babe."

Driving through the neighborhood and crossing through intersections with stoplights, I was still amazed at how friendly the people were in Texas. People were waving at me, smiling and honking their horns.

Unsuspecting, I continued on my way and as I was nearing the end of the song, bursting the last line of "I ... Got ... You ...." I saw something like legs on the top of my windshield.

My first thought was of the tarantulas I had heard about in Texas and as I was about to slam on the brakes, I saw Sam sliding down the window. I knew if I hit the brakes, Sam would fall under the van so I steered the car to the right, knowing Sam would fall to the left and onto the street, which she did.

Miracles do happen and this one was the fact that no vehicle was behind me or coming from the other direction.

Sam, without missing a beat, fell from the van and ran across the street and behind a wood fence. I pulled over and ran after her, thinking I would be searching for her for a week.

I found him just on the other side of the fence, in a sitting position as if frozen, except for the extreme panting and tongue hanging out. As I held her to me, feeling her heart pounding, I was crying and laughing at the same time.

Sam's an East County cat now and still curious as ever. Whenever I hear a Beach Boys surfing song, I think of Sam surfing on the top of the van, but the song that will always be special to me and remind me of Sam is ..."I Got You, Babe!"

TV and video robbing kids of usual physical fitness

By the time they begin first grade, today's children will have spent the equivalent of one full year watching television and playing video games. Between the ages of 6 and 18, the average American child will spend three to five hours a day in front of a television or computer screen, which is more than they will spend engaging in any other recreational activity.

It's time for kids to be kids again. Children need an hour and a half of supervised exercise a day, says Dr. Shawn Bissonnette, M.D., a pediatrician for Fletcher Hills Medical Group in La Mesa, an affiliate of UCSD Healthcare Network.

"That's more than the time allotted for physical education in school," says Bissonnette. "By getting children out of the house and away from the television and video games after school and on weekends, parents will aid in the overall health and fitness of their children."

In order to accomplish this, parents must set an example. If children see that their parents engage in physical activity, then they will be more likely to become active as well. Getting the family involved adds to the fun and shows the child you are interested in him or her. It adds to the child's motivation.

However, parents must be cautious when choosing an exercise program for their children. Jogging for instance, puts a lot of stress on the knees, Bissonnette says.

"Many of the joint problems I see in children occur when they suddenly launch into a heavy running program, without any conditioning," he says. "If their muscles are soft and weak, and they usually are, there is going to be more damage to the joints."

Bissonnette recommends 5 - 10 minutes of slow running or jogging as a good warm-up exercise for youngsters age 5 and up.

There are many other sports that are far better for injury-free training, such as swimming, cycling and walking.

Children also need stretching, — strengthening exercises that increase their flexibility and body tone. Bissonnette advises participation in games such as basketball and volleyball, along with a program of dynamic muscle training that involves calisthenics, broad jumping, push-ups and pull-ups.

"Getting children enrolled in Little League, soccer or dance lessons can provide a thorough exercise program and creates an opportunity for parents to support their children," he says. "Organized sports can also teach children the value of teamwork at an early age. However, make sure that the child has other recreational pursuits."

A child's exercise program should include a variety of activities that will enhance his/her all-around skills, flexibility, stamina and coordination, not just one sport or activity. It should also include warm up and cool down periods.

"It's important for youngsters and adults to get their full quota of exercise," Bissonnette explains. "Start them on a program at age 5 or 6, so that they get into the exercise habit early in life. If you aren't sure how to plan a good program, ask your pediatrician for suggestions."

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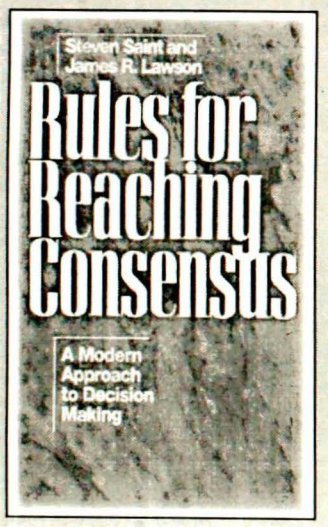

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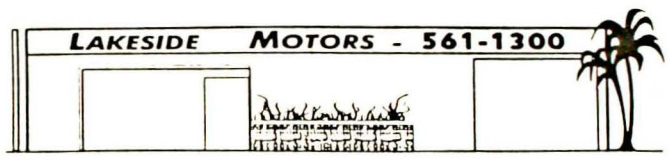

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